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The *ejib* takes the hand of the bridegroom and the *mdadi* that 585
of the bride, and they all walk slowly three times around the hearth (*satsetskhluli*) and the iron chain hanging upon the fireplace, called *sakideli*. The hearth is situated, usually, in the middle of the main living room of the house. The brother of the bride follows the procession and frequently strikes the iron chain with his dagger (*sakideli*) upon which the cooking pot hangs. This is done to keep the evil spirits away, as the Pshavs believe. Here we have the belief in the magical protective power of the dagger against evil spirits.

After the ceremonial walking around the hearth, the bride and groom, called "king and queen"—*mepe da dedopali*—are seated on a high sofa, called *takhta*, covered with a rug. To the right of the bride and groom is the *mejvare* (cross-bearer), and to the left the *ejibi*, then the *mdadi*, the attendants and the guests.

When the bride is seated, the ejibi puts on her lap a healthy male child and tells her: "May the Lord make you happy and give to you a son."

After this the wedding feast begins with songs, music and speeches. The wine is consumed in great quantities, but there is no drinking for the sake of drinking. The Georgian loves wine, which is abundant in his country, not merely as a drink but principally as a means of having a good time. After every feast there are speeches, songs with music, and at intervals, dancing and joking. After the wine is served to everyone, the *khevis-beri* takes the big drinking horn (*kanisi*) full of wine and announces the toast for the newlyweds, and everyone drinks to their health, shouting: *"Gaumarjos!"* meaning "May they be successful!" and *"Sheaberos!"* ("May they live long!"). The wedding feast continues sometimes for two and even three days.

The cross-bearer (*mejvare*) is obliged to be near the newlyweds, and for two days after the wedding he accompanies the bride and groom everywhere, walking before them with the cross in his hands. The *mdadi* is always with the bride during the wedding feast and the *ejibi* with the bridegroom.

The Pshavs believe that the life and every enterprise of human 585 776
beings are endangered by attempts of the evil spirits to attack 789

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585 and harm them. And especially the evil spirits try with all their
776 power to make the bride and groom unhappy—*danavsos*, as they
789 say. To avoid this danger and to keep the evil spirits away, the attendants and friends of the bride and groom fire their guns during the time of leaving the church after the wedding, and on the way to the groom's house, and particularly before entering the house. As protection against the same danger, it is customary for the married couple to pass under crossed sabres when leaving the door of the church. This custom is observed throughout Georgia. The bridegroom, the *ejibi*, the cross-bearer (*mejvare*), the attendants and the brother of the bride are obliged to be armed with daggers. The *mdadi* sits with a dagger in her hand. This weapon is regarded by the Pshavs[11] as a sacred object (samkhto sagania), and they believe that the evil spirits are frightened by the dagger and will avoid it.

585 The marriage customs among the other groups of Georgian Highlanders, compared with those of the Pshavs as described above, show local variations and differences in detail. Thus among the Khevsurs, neighbors of the Pshavs, all arrangements previous to the wedding are usually made by the parents of the young people during their childhood and even when they are babies in their cribs. As a token of betrothal, the father of the groom gives to the parents of the bride an *abaz*.[12] But in spite of the early betrothal the wedding takes place only when the girl is of advanced age, not younger than twenty years old. At this time the groom sends to her a woman and two reliable men with three or four sheep, or in some communities the bridegroom sends two men with two sheep; one of the sheep is killed in the *Khati* and the other at the house of the bride. The envoys of the groom approach the house of the bride secretly and break in suddenly. The relatives of the bride, knowing well the meaning of the intrusion, must, according to custom, argue for a time with the newcomers and decline all their propositions, saying that they are not worthy of such honors. The intruders quiet them by praising the imaginary merits of the groom, and after some discussion they

[11] Khizanashvili: 135.
[12] *Abaz*—money, equivalent to twenty Russian kopecks.

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Concerning the Tushes, neighbors of the Khevsurs, their marriage ceremonies as well as their other customs are almost identical. Characteristic are the views of Professor A. Kharkhanov concerning the customs dealing with marriage among the Tushes.

"Tushes, like the other mountaineers," writes Professor Khakhanov,[14] "not so long ago had the custom of stealing their brides. The administration is gradually forcing out this kind of marriage, but it has not yet succeeded in abolishing it. The signs of this tradition may be traced even in the marriage proceedings conducted by the clergy of the Georgian Orthodox Church. Thus, for example, when the groom goes to take his bride into the church, she is hidden in a remote room of the house and in order to see her the groom must bribe one of the bride's female relatives. The second indication of the ancient custom we see in the following: during the return of the young couple from the church after the wedding to the house of the groom, they are not permitted to enter until the bride's attendants extinguish with gunfire the burning torches in the yard. The peaceful followers of the bride represent the intimidation of the pursuers of the rapacious ravisher of the young Tush woman and the custom of shooting on the torches indicates the former bloody firings between the abductor of the bride and her relatives. When the aim (the extinguishing of the *fakels*) is attained, the guests are invited to supper. They give presents of money to the bride, and woolen socks to the groom. On the second day the veil which hides the face of the bride from the curious eyes of the Tushes is taken away, and on the third day (after the wedding) she returns to the house of her father, where she stays sometimes weeks, months, or even years, and only after the expiration of a certain time does the husband take her into his home."

Describing the marriage ceremonies among the Tushes, Professor Khakhanov interprets the established customs in such a manner, which in our opinion is in error. Thus the custom of extinguishing the burning fakels with gunshots by the bride's

[14] Khakhanov: a, 48-9.

followers does not represent at all the survival of the supposed former bloody encounters between the ravisher and his party and the bride's kinsmen, which the author thinks took place when the "custom" of marriage was by capture; but it may have a purely religio-magical explanation, like the customary firings of guns used by the Georgians at the time of childbirth, upon the married couple's departure from the church and after the wedding, and on the dawn of the first day of a new year; while the same explanation applies to the custom of firing guns during an eclipse of the sun.

If the economic conditions and the rigorous struggle for existence, as mentioned above, compel the Khevsurs to limit artificially the number of their children, the same conditions compel the Svans to take more drastic steps than the practice of abortion in controlling the birth rate, to practice the infanticide.

Among the Svans, as among the Khevsurs, the young people are engaged to marry in their early childhood, and there are even cases when the engagement takes place before the birth of the couple, when two friendly families decide to intermarry their children before they are born, in order to strengthen their amicable relations. All the necessary arrangements for the marriage are made by the parents of the young people, whose personal feelings are totally ignored.

The first step in the marriage is the match-making, when the parents of the bride receive from the parents of the groom one ruble or a bullet as a token of agreement. Later the betrothal is performed, consisting of the payment of two sheep or an ox or a cow, and is called *nakdanur*. After the *nakdanur* is given, before the wedding, the groom is obliged to pay for his future wife the special bride-price, called *nachvlash*. The *nachvlash* is paid by the groom himself or by his parents. His kinsmen do not assist him, as is the case among the other groups of Georgian Highlanders. The *nachvlash* consists, among the common people, of from 100 to 200 rubles, and among the upper class—the nobility, called *aznauri*—the bride-price is twice as large, i. e., 200 to 400 rubles. According to the data furnished by Margiani,[18] the amount of the

[18] Margiani: 76.

783 562 passes everything, one after another, over the fire, and at this time she is obliged to say the words established by custom: "Fire, give thy purity." After the *matusva,* she must put the things out of the *samrevlo* and shake them well. This is the second part of the purification and is called *gamotskepa.* And at last she must sprinkle everything with holy water which is brought to her for this purpose from the home. She takes the water into her mouth and so sprinkles the things. This last part of the purification is called *shapkhukeba.*

Only after the accomplishment of all the above-mentioned tasks are the woman, her baby and belongings regarded as clean and as having the right to enter the home of her family.

278 The "holy" water which is used by the woman for the purification is the water which is blessed by the preacher during the church ceremonies in commemoration of Christ's baptism. The people take the water home and preserve it in bottles for such future use as cleansing, purifying, and medical purposes. This custom is in universal use throughout Georgia. I remember seeing such bottles in many houses. The water is regarded by the people as medicine against almost every kind of disease: such as sore eyes, stomach trouble, headache, etc.

844 562 Among the Svans also, the woman lying in childbed is regarded as unclean and is put in a separate place but not in a special hut built for her sojourn. The woman is in isolation and in considered as unclean until the priest says special prayers of purification upon her and the baby. Not only contact, as was mentioned above concerning the women in menstruation, but even the mere presence of such a woman in the neighborhood makes a hunter polluted and consequently unable to take part in the hunting expedition.

844 787 When the Khevsur woman is in travail during childbirth and her loud screams and cries are heard far from the *kokhi,* her husband and relatives approach the hut and with loud shouts fire their guns in order to keep away evil spirits. Or sometimes the husband runs into the hut, places his gun on the shoulder of his suffering wife, and shouts to her words of encouragement while firing his gun. He does this only with the aim of driving

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away the evil spirits, who, as they believe, are torturing the woman. This custom is preserved at present in the inaccessible mountain regions of the Caucasus, and was in ancient times practiced in the whole of Georgia, with the difference that instead of a gun the man used his bow and arrow.

This belief in the existence of the evil spirits attacking the woman in childbed and the new-born baby prevails among all groups of the Georgian Highlanders. Thus the Khevsurs believe that the evil spirits who attack the mother and the babe are small black creatures, countless in number and called *dobilebi*.[11] The people believe that the *dobilebi* live among the old deserted homes (ruins) in the village or its vicinity. Such places are known to the Khevsurs as the *banurani*. The evil spirits (*dobilebi*) annoy and disturb the human beings, although they cannot kill them. The *dobilebi* especially seek women and babies, especially children when they are ill. This is regarded by the Khevsurs as the cause of the attack of the *dobilebi*, which they express in the following words: *"Dobilthashi gekhviv."* In order to drive the evil spirits from the ill child it is necessary, as they believe, for the whole family to observe the custom called *ashlis dashla*. It consists of taking forty-five cakes, or, as they say in Georgian, *samjer khuthmeti*, meaning "three times fifteen" (from the Georgian words, *sami*, meaning three, and *khuthmeti*, meaning fifteen). Besides these forty-five pieces of bread, a special large cake is baked with cheese or meat filling and smeared on top with butter. This large cake is called *satsinao*. All these cakes are brought to the place of residence of the evil spirits and thrown to the village children, who, having been informed beforehand, are waiting by the ruins (*banurani*). The child who succeeds in catching the large cake (the *satsinao*) is regarded as the luckiest. Instead of bringing cakes, the Khevsurs sometimes kill a goat in the *banurani*. In this case the head of the animal belongs to the man who killed it and the rest to the owner.

This custom of bringing the cake or killing the animal in the *banurani*—the place regarded as the residence of the evil spirits—

[11] Bardavelidze-Lomia: 254-5.

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remnant of this injunction survives in the present custom, among 171
modern Parsis, on the occasion of the completion of the fifth and seventh months of pregnancy, when a lamp of clarified butter is lighted in the house by some families. The reason assigned for this is that the fire so kindled in the house keeps out *daevas,* i. e., evil influences from the house.

The Babylonians[26] believed in the existence of the dreadful child-slaying creature, the demoness called *Lamashtu.* Her character was inherited by a creature prominent in later Jewish Demonology. *Lilith*[27] was the head of the female demons and was regarded as the incubus and with a demoniac first wife of Adam, who became in the course of time the demon who bewitched, stole, changed, and killed both children and mothers in child-birth. There were many demons who sought new-born children, but the most dangerous among them was the above mentioned *Lilith.*

Among the Summerians[28] the most dreaded of all demons was *Lamme,* or *Lamashtu* in Acadian, the female vampire who slew children, drank the blood of men, and ate their flesh. This name passed into Greek mythology as *Lamia,* derived from another name for her, *Lam-me-a.*

Believing in the existence of malignant spirits and the danger 789 ●
of their attack upon women in childbed and their babies, the 846
people have adopted such special protective devices as certain actions, objects, words, and even the use of colors regarded as possessing magical powers.

One of the customs used to protect mother and child against evil aggressions is the day-and-night watch.

The first days after the child's birth are regarded by the people as the most dangerous, because the mother and child are so weak that they cannot resist the demoniac forces. Therefore, they are carefully guarded both by day and by night.

The Georgians of Imerthi consider the first fifteen days as the 846
most critical in the life of the child, and therefore exercise special watchfulness during this period. In order to protect the baby

[26] Langdon: 366.
[27] Gaster: 655.
[28] Langdon: 366.

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every night during its first two weeks of life, a group comprising mostly young people is assembled in the room with the mother and pass the nights in games, dancing and music. These nightly vigils have a special name in Georgian, *hamis theva,* meaning "watch night."

The Georgians of Guria[29] also observe the custom of *hamis theva,* but only for one night, either one week or two weeks after the child is born.

The Georgians of Megrelia also have the custom of observing the night watch, which is called in their language *serish takhua,* meaning "vigilant night." Literally the Megrelian expression, *serish takhua,* means in English, "breaking of a night," from the Megrelian words, *seri* (night) and the verb, *takhua* (to break).

Besides the Georgians, the same custom of night watch is observed by other peoples of the Caucasus. For example, the Karachais[30] regard the first seven days after the birth of the child as the most dangerous, and in order to protect the child from the attack of evil spirits the young girls are assembled in the room with the mother and baby, and pass the time in games while watching the child. The seventh night is regarded by them as the most dangerous and has the special name, *stim keche* or *bastiri klangan,* which means "the night of nightmare."

Among the Talish, on the sixth day after the birth of the child, to protect it from the attack of the evil spirit called *Shasha,* the relatives and friends of the family keep the watch-night. They keep the light the whole night through in the room where the baby is, and place a fish net over the crib. In case they fall asleep, they place bread and milk at the entrance of the room, on the porch, so that, as they think, *Shasha* will eat it and will not touch the child.

Besides watching the mother and child against possible attack by the evil spirits, the people resort for protection to the magical powers of different objects. Among them the most important in the Caucasus is plain iron, or such objects as daggers, sabres, sickles, axes, awls, knives (especially with black handles), etc.

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[29] Mamaladze: 155.
[30] Chursin: e, 28.

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Besides iron objects, other things frequently used for magical purposes are charcoal, rope in imitation of a snake, red thread, and fish net; and it may be added that they believe in the protective and cleansing power of fire.

However, of all the objects used for magical purposes, the people in the Caucasus regard iron as the most important.

So the Khevsur woman[31] expecting a child must have under her pillow, especially for the occasion, a sabre called in Georgian *kajistmiani khmali,* which represents a sabre with the allegorical picture of the evil spirit.

The Pshavs,[32] neighbors of the Khevsurs, give to the woman in childbed a dagger and a pig's tooth as protection against the evil spirit called *matsuli.* The Pshavs believe that the evil spirit is afraid of the pig's tooth and dagger, and will leave the woman and babe undisturbed.

Among the Georgian mountaineers of Karthli the woman preparing herself for delivery places around her bed such iron things as an awl, a sickle, an axe, a knife with a black handle, and other iron objects.

The Georgians of the Thelav district, department of Tiflis, in order to keep a child quiet and safely protected from evil spirits, put into the child's crib such pieces of iron because they believe the evil spirit will avoid them.

The same Georgians,[33] when carrying a child on a night trip, consider it necessary to protect it from evil spirits by putting a knife and a piece of charcoal in its bed-linen, because the people think that evil spirits are afraid of these things. And for the protection of the mother from the evil spirits, they put a dagger or sabre under her pillow. It is also interesting to note the custom of the same group of Georgians to lighten the sufferings of women in travail. If a woman is in travail, her husband must bring water in the skirt of his hand and give a drink to her. Or sometimes they invite a man who has chanced to set free a frog from the mouth of a snake. He approaches the suffering woman and,

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[31] Bardavelidze-Lomia: 238.
[32] Khizanashvili: 138.
[33] Stepanov: 63, 81.

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giving her water to drink, says: "Child, separate from the mother, as I have separated the frog from the snake!"

In this last-mentioned custom we have the belief in the magical power of the action of separation with the same object of helping the woman in travail and speeding the delivery as is used in other actions, such as opening, division, unlocking, emptying, etc.

The Georgians of Imerethi,[34] in order to protect the child from the evil spirits, put in its cradle, under the pillow, a knife with a black handle, and charcoal. Many pregnant women carry a knife with them during the day, and at night keep them under their pillows—for the purpose of keeping the evil spirits and their dangerous influence away from them.

Among the Georgians of the province of Ratcha[35] the woman delivers her child in a separate room. She is put, not on a bed, but on straw which is spread on the floor. And as the woman is very weak by this time, they believe that the evil spirit may easily seize her *sheipkros,* as they say in Georgian. To avoid this danger, they put under her pillow the holy image of the Virgin Mary and a dagger, as in their opinion the two-edged dagger is the only weapon of which the evil spirit is afraid.

In this case we have the usual mixture in the Caucasus of the old primitive beliefs with Christianity. The image of the Virgin Mary is endowed with the same magical power of protection from evil spirits as a piece of iron—the dagger.

The belief in the magical power of a dagger (iron) is clearly manifested in the customs of the Pshavs,[36] observed during the marriage ceremony, when the brother of the bride, at the time of the procession around the house-hearth, strikes with his dagger the iron chain called *sakideli,* in order to keep the evil spirits away from the bride. The dagger is considered by the Pshavs, as we mentioned previously,[37] as a sacred object, *samkhtho saganía,* and drives evil spirits away.

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[34] Mashrko: 306.
[35] Japaridze: 138.
[36] Khizanáshvili: 125.
[37] See Chapter VI on Marriage.

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In describing the customs of the Georgian Highlanders and the Georgians in general pertaining to the protection of women and children against the aggression of evil spirits, we found that iron is regarded by them as possessed with special magical power. Not only iron as a metal, but also the profession connected with it, as that of a blacksmith, is viewed by the people as supernatural and endowed with magical power. This is clearly seen in the beliefs of the Georgians of Samurzagan.[28]

Not only iron as a metal, but also the blacksmith's trade, all objects associated with it, and the person of the blacksmith himself are regarded by the people as endowed with supernatural or magical powers. The people look with reverence and fear on the blacksmith's anvil. They expect from it the healing of the sick and help in all kinds of difficulties of their earthly life. They take the oath upon the anvil and are convinced that the oath-breaker will be severely punished with some kind of misfortune. Believing in the supernatural power of the anvil, they offer to it numerous gifts, consisting of goats, oxen, and money. Some do this out of gratitude, others from fear. One suspected of theft or a debtor refusing to meet his obligations is compelled to take the oath on the anvil in order to clear himself of suspicion.

Like the blacksmith's anvil, the person of the blacksmith also is held in high esteem by the people. The blacksmith is regarded as a diviner and sorcerer. If someone is ill he sends one of his relatives or friends to the blacksmith for help and to find out the cause of the illness. The blacksmith either satisfies the petitioner himself or announces secretly in a mysterious way that the affliction is sent either as punishment for some wrong committed by the ill person or simply that the anvil demands from the stricken person a fitting offering. Usually the kind of offering is indicated, as a white goat with straight horns, or a brown ox with a long tail reaching to the ground, or perhaps money. It is necessary to note that in naming the animals to be offered or the money to be paid, the blacksmith takes into consideration the economic status of the petitioner, and in his choice sacrifical

[28] Machavariani, D., and Bartolomei, A.: 74-83.

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The same cleansing power of fire is used by the Khevsur woman at the time of her purification when she leaves the menstrual hut (*samrevlo*) and returns home with her baby.

Many other peoples of the Caucasus share the Georgians' belief in the supernatural power of fire.[42] Thus, for example, the Abkhazians,[43] in order to protect women in childbed from the evil spirit, called *abn-ikou,* ask the help of the god of the house-hearth, called *ajakhar,* promising him a thank-offering for his help.

The people also believe in the protective power of a rope in the shape of a snake. For example, in the district of Sakatali, a rope resembling a snake is laid around the woman in childbed and the people continually fire their guns, because they believe that evil spirits are afraid of snakes and gun-shots.

In some parts of Georgia red thread is also used as a defense against the evil spirits attacking women in childbed. In such cases, the hip of the woman in travail is bound with red thread as a means of providing sympathetic magic which will protect her from evil spirits[44] who, as the people think, cause the suffering.

It should be interesting to mention briefly the belief of the Georgians, not only in the magical power of red thread, but in the red color generally. Almost every contagious disease is understood by the people to be sent not merely by evil spirits but as personifications of the spirits themselves.[45] Therefore, to cure the sick it is necessary, in their opinion, to please the spirits. The spirits are called *batonebi,* meaning "lords," the plural form of the Georgian word, *batoni,* meaning a lord. In order to appease and beseech the *batonebi*[46] to depart from sick persons, they try to please them with songs, music, prayers, decorating the room with gay colors, putting on a new dress, keeping everything clean, avoiding any disturbances, etc.

The principal color in decorating and dressing is red. This color predominates, and red thread is used as a protective

[42] Chursin: f.
[43] Derjavin: 14-15.
[44] Jashvili: 63.
[45] Stepanov: 88-9.
[46] Mamaladze: 45-6.

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755 measure. For example, if someone is ill with smallpox or measles, his neighbors stretch red thread around their fences and bind the waists of their children with red thread, because they believe it has the power to stop the disease. I remember seeing the children wearing such arm-bands for two weeks, when the child of one of our neighbors was ill with measles. And in the family of the sick an offering is brought to the *batonebi*. The offering consists of a hen, if the ill person is a girl, or a cockerel if it be a boy. The head, wings and legs of this fowl are painted red and the fowl is turned loose in the yard. Among the Georgians of Imerti,[47] when the sick person has recovered, the offered fowl is killed, cooked, and, together with cakes specially baked for the purpose, is taken into the nearby forest and put in such a place that "no human hand can reach them." The food and dishes are left in the woods and it is strictly forbidden to touch them. The Georgians of Megrelia also give similar offerings to the *batonebi*, as mentioned, with the difference that the fowl is permitted to live to senility, when it is killed and eaten by the family sacramentally.

● 787 948 In addition to the above-mentioned objects used as protection against evil spirits, the fish net is also regarded as a powerful medium.

The belief in the protective power of the fish net against the evil spirits attacking the mother in childbed and her babe was universal throughout Georgia in past times, and survives in different parts of the country today.

Interesting information concerning this matter is found in the work of Dr. J. Reineggs.[48] He relates that in order to protect the woman in childbed and her babe from the attack of evil spirits, the Georgians observe the custom of placing a sword or dagger beneath the pillow of the mother. And over the blanket of her bed is spread a red fish net, and at its sides lead bullets are fastened in order to keep the net in equilibrium on all sides and make it impossible for the evil spirits to penetrate the covers. In

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[47] Sagaradze: 13-14.
[48] Reineggs: 112-113.

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such an uncomfortable position the woman must remain for forty days before she will be permitted to breathe fresh air or leave the bed. "She exposes herself to every possible danger," adds the author, "if she at this time trims her hair or cuts her nails."

The belief in the magical power of the fish net is also expressed in special prayers[49] used for the healing of sick people of their afflictions, as, for example, in the prayers of the Georgians of Guria[50] to cure a cold, known by the name of *ujmuri*. "*Kirkali* is good," is said in the prayer. "Fish net by the head, the hackle-comb by the side," etc. The fish net is used also in the prayers recited at the time of childbirth by the Georgians of Meskheti.[51]

The pieces of such a net are kept sometimes in the house for this purpose. In the Museum of the Georgian Society of History and Ethnography, situated in Tiflis, is conserved a net specially made to cover the bed of a woman in childbirth. This net is made of red silk thread and is bestrewn with spangles. It was brought to the Museum from the upper part of Imerethi.[52]

Here, as in the case described by Dr. Reineggs, we have the net of red color which may be regarded as more powerful than the ordinary net, because to the magical power of the net is added the power of red thread and the color itself.

The Georgians of Imerethi,[53] to safeguard a woman with child, stretch a fish net from the ceiling over her bed, put a dagger under her pillow, and an axe on the threshold of the room. The evil spirit, they think, may be frightened by the axe and will not dare to enter the woman's room; but in case this obstacle fails to stop him, he surely will be scared of the net, in which he may be ensnared, and upon the dagger, as upon the axe, he may cut himself. With all these precautions taken, the evil spirits will by no means disturb the mother and the babe.

The same custom was formerly observed also by the Georgians of Megrelia. In the seventeenth century, at the time of the

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[49] Chursin: 0, 222.
[50] Mamaladze: 103-4.
[51] Khakhanov: b, 11.
[52] Chursin: *Ibid.*
[53] Mashurko: 306.

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residence in Megrelia of the Italian missionary, Archangelo Lamberti, this custom was in common use in the country. "As the most important means against the evil spirits," writes Lamberti,[54] "they (the Megrelians) regard the fish net with which they cover the beds of the sick and the cradles of the children. With this net they think to cleanse the air of witchcraft and the 'evil eye,' which, as they believe, is dangerous to the sick person. Besides, in order to frighten the devil, they put under the pillow of the sick person an unsheathed sword and also a spear or some other weapon."

In order to protect the woman in childbed, the Georgians of Meskhethi[55] nail a horse shoe or iron chain on the threshold of the room, because they believe that the evil spirit (*avi suli*) will not dare to step over them and enter the room. The mother and the baby are covered with the net, and at the mother's head they put a dagger and a spit with three onions upon it, as they believe that the odor of the onions is disgusting to the *avi suli*. The dagger and the spit, as iron things, are regarded by them as the best means of repulsing the evil spirits. But to make safety certain, besides the above measures, it is necessary also, they think, to say a special prayer for the occasion which must be repeated by the woman with child.

Among the Georgians of Guria,[56] the woman expecting a child is called in Guria *melogine*, meaning "the laying in bed," from the Georgian word, *logini* (bed).[57] After the birth of the child as soon as the woman is put to bed, the dagger is placed under her pillow, the iron hackle-comb is put under her bed, and upon the bed is hung the fish net. This is done with the aim of keeping away the evil spirits from the mother and babe, whom it likes to attack. The net, dagger and comb are used in this case as the objects of which, according to the people's opinion, the evil spirit is afraid.

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[54] Lamberti: 168.
[55] Khakhanov: b, 10.
[56] Jorbenadze: 246.
[57] Mamaladze: 92.

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and pays him dearly in order that he may free him from the oath. Sometimes not only the witness but even the person who took the oath and won the case is brought to the conviction, in the same way as already stated dealing with witnesses, in the falsity of testimony given by him, and consequently he returns not only everything received by him through the judges, but also pays voluntarily a high fine in order to be freed from the oath.

As an illustration of this superstitious belief connected with the process of taking an oath, we may mention a certain appeal of a Megrelian made in court.[51] The petitioner had asked the court to take measures in endorsing his request, which was based on sheer superstition and was deeply engraved on the mind and conscience of the people as a custom inherited from their ancestors. "Fifteen years ago," said the Megrelian, "I had a dispute with my neighbor about land. We had a hearing, and when I took the oath, with ten witnesses admitted by the plaintiff, the land was given to me. From that time on I owned the property, and two years later sold half of it to the priest. Soon afterward, one misfortune after another began in my home, and I was convinced that the cause of all this was the falsely taken oath. In order to free myself from the calamity, I returned the land to the neighbor, but the priest will not return his portion for any price, and now I have come to ask the court to order the priest to sell back to me his portion of the land, and I will give a higher price than that fixed by our honest neighbors. If I am not freed from this oath I will be a most unhappy man." The authorities ignored this petition, but the priest was obliged to yield to the persistent demands of the man and his relatives and finally returned the land with great profits. In getting back the land, the Megrelian was satisfied, and his provoked conscience was calmed.

This fear of the people before the holy image (*khati*) and the endeavor to appease its anger are based on the belief that everyone is able to put a curse on his enemy before a *khati*, for which he has to pray and ask the deity to punish his antagonist. Consequently, according to the people's opinion, the offender will be

[51] Borozdin: 36.

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severely punished by the *khati* not only during his earthly life but also after his death in eternity. This procedure, so dreaded by the Megrelians, is known by them under the name of *khatis genochama*, meaning in English, "transmission to the *khati*." When someone among them finds that he is cursed, or, to use the Megrelian expression, *genochamilie* (meaning "is given over") by his enemy he hastens to make peace with him and satisfies all his claims in order, as they say, "to be freed from the wrath of *khati*."

But there is a way to avoid the anger of *khati* in giving false testimony. The man by taking an oath is not always obliged to tell "the truth and only the truth," but he may also lie and escape unpunished, with a clear conscience and peace in his criminal heart. To do this, he concludes some sort of contract or rather promises a bribe to the *khati* consisting of some sort of offering, such as a cow or sheep. This fact is described by the Italian A. Lamberti, as observed by him among the Georgians of Megrelia. "By small evidences the Megrelians have the custom," writes A. Lamberti,[52] "of permitting the accused to exculpate himself by taking an oath. The oath must be taken before any one of the holy images. The plaintiff chooses the holy image, and also the sanctuary where the accused (defender) must take the oath. This place is kept in secrecy by him, because if the accused finds out the place appointed for the ceremony he will present himself before the holy image the day before the appointed time, kneel before it and say: 'Thou knowest well that I have committed the crime and that I am confessing now on my knees to you and declaring my guilt; may this confession remain between us both, and as I have fulfilled my duty toward you with this confession, (please) forgive me if in the presence of the others I shall deny my guilt. In order that thou wilt not be angry with me I pledge thee a cow (or sheep).' After this secret confession he counts his conscience clean, and in taking the oath officially before this image he is convinced that he has full right to lie and still be unharmed."

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[52] Lamberti: 86.